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Data to Help Strengthen Distribution Sector

4 Top Trends Driving Sales into the Future

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DISTRIBUTION UPDATE

By TOM FOURNIER, Chair, ISSA Canada Distributor Council

When we started the ISSA Canada Distributor Council in mid-2023, one of the actions we discussed was doing some survey work so we could better understand what we could do as a council to best serve distributors and have them feel like valued stakeholders in ISSA Canada.

As this was being discussed, we found that the United States had sent out a survey titled “2023 ISSA Distributor Trends/Benchmarking Survey.” This survey was a very lengthy and specific in nature, which may have limited the responses.

Consisting of 46 questions, the survey received 113 responses – 78 per cent were from the U.S., seven per cent were from Canada and 15 per cent were from international and “other” regions. Of the 113 respondents, 72 per cent identified as a “janitorial distributor.”

An interesting note was that approximately five per cent of the distributors who responded were 10 years in business or less. The vast majority of distributor respondents were in business 10 years or more!

The survey’s questions included the following:
• General scope and background
• Concerns
• Primary Growth Strategies
• Technology
• Suppliers/Product Lines
• Staffing/Personnel

As a Canadian council, our group reviewed the results and thought that, while there are some interesting results, the limited number of responses make it hard for any insights to be actionable.

While we applaud the initiative, the Canadian council felt that we can learn from this example and chart our own path forward.

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Putting the Employee Breakroom Back to Work

Combine comfort with hygiene and sustainability for a restful space

By JULIE HOWARD & DAN NIRENBERG

In recent years, there have been countless discussions and studies striving to pinpoint what, exactly, employees want and need if they are to forego the comforts of home and the freedoms of remote work to return to the workplace on a regular basis. The list of wants and needs is vast, meandering from accessible mental health services, elevated hygiene, and a greater sustainability commitment to improved workplace culture, casual collaboration spaces, and an integration with nature.

While it is not realistic for employers to meet the desires of every employee when welcoming them back to the workplace, determining what will have the greatest impact on the greatest number of employees is a reasonable place to start. Several recent studies provide guidance. A 2022 study from insurance company Aflac states that 59 per cent of American workers are experiencing at least moderate levels of burnout.

Another study, published this year in the Harvard Business Review, finds that taking consistent breaks throughout the day improves employee productivity and well-being. Enter the employee break room. No, not the 1970s model with glaring fluorescent lights, an out-of-order microwave, a Formica countertop held together with duct tape, and an always-empty coffee pot; rather, one that in its design, functionality and amenities demonstrates a culture of care.

The following suggestions will help guide facility managers and employers as they look to boost the break room experience.

EMPLOYEE-FIRST SPACE PLANNING

Whether employers are creating an entirely new break room or working within an existing space, they need to approach its design from an employee-first perspective.
first perspective. An ideal space should provide employees with a visual, mental and physical respite from their day-to-day duties.

For example, while making room for necessities such as a refrigerator, microwave, coffee make and sink, consider configuring the space to be less kitchen and more lounge by providing different seating options that can accommodate socializing and eating, as well as personal quiet time.

Explore lighting options that provide a natural ambiance and appropriate brightness without doing harm to individuals or the environment. Fluorescent lights have long been a mainstay in most workplaces because they are energy efficient, readily available and relatively inexpensive. But they are also made from toxic materials, emit harmful ultraviolet light, and have been known to cause health problems from those suffering from light sensitivity.

Because colour is not only something seen but also something felt, make mindful colour choices to ensure the break room is a place to escape to, not from. Green, for example, represents connection, blue is calming, yellow is associated with happiness and orange is energetic.

Bring the outdoors and its many benefits in by incorporating indoor plants and natural materials, such as wood, stone or metal, into the break room space. Plants are known to clean and humidify the air, reduce stress levels and improve focus.

**FUNCTIONAL HYGIENE**

A recent study from Ipsos finds that 62 per cent of Americans consider their health as being more important to them now than before the COVID-19 pandemic. And, as numerous studies have suggested, including one from the Cleaning Coalition of America, employees need enhanced workplace cleaning and disinfection practices to feel safe at work. Unfortunately, the employee break room – the area where employees should be able to reset and recharge – is one of the most germ-ridden spaces in the workplace, according to a study published in Science Direct.

The data from these studies provides facility managers with clear direction when it comes to making break room purchasing decisions: Choose products that are engineered to protect employees by helping to improve hygiene. Disposable dishware and cutlery, for example, are hygienic alternatives to permanent-ware and traditional cutlery. Fortunately, there are dozens of disposable options to consider that do not require employees to sacrifice quality, such as disposable dishware that is microwave safe, cut-resistant and soak-proof, as well as disposable cutlery that is durable and break-resistant.

To further elevate hygiene, consider using cutlery and napkin dispensers so employees only touch and take the product they need – unlike cutlery in open bins and napkins in exposed stacks. Paper towel and soap dispensers, too, warrant placement in the break room, as they help ensure employees can properly wash and dry their hands before and after eating. Automated touchless paper towel and soap dispensers also help reduce touch points and the risk of cross-contamination.

**PRACTICAL SUSTAINABILITY**

It has long been suggested that doing what is right for the environment is right for individuals. The Planet Blue Ambassador program at the University of Michigan reveals the connection between individual well-being and sustainability, stating that human health is inseparable from environmental health.

Too often, however, the pursuit of hygiene – and employee priority – is considered contrary to the pursuit of sustainability. Fortunately, when it comes to the employee break room, that is simply not the case.

It’s not difficult to surmise the potential environmental benefits of indoor plants. Through photosynthesis, they convert carbon dioxide into oxygen. But what about disposable dishware and cutlery or paper towels? With just a little product exploration, facility managers will quickly find options that positively impact sustainability, stating that human health is inseparable from environmental health.

Secondary surveys will delve into more specific market insight data and/or establish general needs that ISSA Canada could work to support.

Market insights, data for benchmarking and trend identification could also be very useful to our distributor constituents, as well as other stakeholders in the cleaning industry supply chain.

To be successful, we feel it is important to create a database of quality distribution contacts as well as role identifiers. There is no limit to the number of subscribers per distributor.

Target distribution subscribers could be both ISSA members and non-members so that the insights can be as comprehensive as possible.

We have created a Distribution sector landing page on the ISSA Canada website to be a central repository of our distribution resources. It will also help facilitate new subscribers and the subsequent growth of our distribution mailing list. The landing page can be found HERE.

We look forward to continuing to serve you with our Canadian distributor council in 2024!
Artificial Intelligence in the Warehouse

Artificial intelligence (AI) is not magic. From my perspective and in the context of distributors, AI is a combination of software and data to solve and prevent problems. The software is usually a distributor’s ERP (Enterprise Resources Planning) system, modified to include AI logic and formulas, potentially interacting with CRM (customer relationship management) and e-commerce systems, and using data.

The data is a repository of information that can originate in the ERP database, from an AI request, perhaps from text messaging, emails, possibly enhanced via an internet search and maybe other sources.

So, what is AI? Software plus data. Simply put, AI is machine “learning.”

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AI IN THE WAREHOUSE

Here are two examples where AI could help improve the accuracy and efficiency of your warehouse. Notice that AI combines data (“synthesizes”), makes a decision (“interprets”) and makes a recommendation (“projects”).

• Distributors and wholesalers want “high” warehouse accuracy. One definition of accuracy is calculated as follows: First, calculate the number of mistakes in a week divided by the number of lines picked and packed in that week, and call it ER; then calculate 1- minus ER, and call it AD; finally, multiply AD by 100, and the result will be the percentage accuracy. It’s almost impossible to achieve 100 per cent accuracy because the cost would be very high. Some preventative measures would not be practical. So, distributors want to know the level of accuracy they should try to achieve. AI might recommend a target accuracy level by using the information found on the internet or based on a formula the company develops based on historical data. Using picking as an example, for each item and pack size in the warehouse (e.g., floor wax), the software would search the internet for reported levels of accuracy. If enough data for an item and pack size is found, the software will continued on page 7 »
calculate an average accuracy level and average variation from the average accuracy level. For a preselected product group, sub-group or vendor, if a suitable level is calculated and the variation is acceptable, AI would display the calculated average and any actual service level calculated by the ERP software, and the difference.

- Determining if a worker is as productive as desired requires standards (e.g., pieces/cartons per hour) for each job (e.g. picking) and shift. This requires captured data for each worker, such as date, clock times in and out, and cartons or pieces picked; all of which are captured via barcode scanning. Manually calculating those standards is time-consuming, but AI might determine those standards in seconds.

In this example, for each shift, AI-enabled software would search the internet for reported picking standards. If enough data for a shift is found, the software will calculate an average picking rate and average variation from the average picking rate. If a suitable rate is calculated and the variation is acceptable, AI would display the calculated average rate – the standard (standards by type of item, e.g., bathroom tissue, are too difficult to obtain from the internet because too many warehouse-specific factors affect that level of standard).

AI could also display the actual pick rate and the difference from the standard (amount and per cent) for each worker and shift within a pre-specified date range. A manager would decide whether or not to store an AI-calculated rate, by shift, or store them all.

**IMPROVING OPERATIONAL EFFICIENCY WITHOUT AI**

For most distributors, the practical and effective use of AI is coming but may not be here yet. Until then, here are a few tips for achieving high warehouse accuracy:

- **Organization.** Store items picked the most often closest to the packing area, and even where items are stored by “family” or vendor line, store the fastest moving ones closer to the front of the section.

- **Receiving.** If the unit of measure displayed in PO/put away data is not the same as that on the corresponding packing list, the receiver should note that discrepancy on the packing list or record it via a scanner.

- **Put away.** If there is no permanently assigned storage location for a newly received item or an alternate location is used, the person doing put away must record the selected location as soon as possible.

- **Pull down.** The time to replenish picking locations from bulk/overflow is before daily picking begins, regardless of whether someone uses a printed pull-down list or displays data on a barcode scanner. Pulling down and picking at the same time leads to mistakes.

- **Picking.** To minimize picking time, items must be picked in a sequence that minimizes walking time. Rushing to make up for long travel distances causes mistakes.

- **Packing and quality control.** To avoid repeating mistakes already made, an order checker should not be the same person who picked the order being checked.

- **Loading.** To reduce mistakes, the smaller and lighter items and packed cartons of an order could be placed on rolling shelves that are used only for staging outbound orders. Each rolling shelf can be pushed into or near the appropriate truck.

AI in the warehouse may be worth it in improving your accuracy and productivity, optimizing operational efficiency. But it is not magic and can come with some challenges. Therefore, do your due diligence and carefully weigh the benefits and challenges of AI, and make the decision if it is suitable for your warehouse now or in the future.

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**Putting the Employee Breakroom Back to Work**

both hygiene and sustainability. Consider bamboo cutlery. It performs like traditional cutlery, is single use like disposable cutlery, but it is made from natural resources and is industrial and home compostable. Similarly, polylactic acid or polylactide (PLA) cutlery is made from renewable material and is industrial compostable.

Insulated hot cups provide a hygienic, single-use beverage experience and, unlike most disposable cups, eliminate the need to double-cup or use a corrugated sleeve to help prevent heat transfer. Single-use cups made from recovered paper or recycled content help divert waste from going to landfill.

Innovations in dispensing systems for cutlery, napkins and paper towels enable one-at-a-time dispensing, which helps reduce both product usage and waste by encouraging employees to only take what they need. New dispenser designs and capacity features also reduce change-out waste.

**REJUVENATING REST**

An employee break room demonstrates a culture of care by providing a space where employees can take a few minutes for themselves. Employers who recognize the importance of breaks – and act on it – will reap the many benefits that come with rejuvenated workers. As transformationalist Hiral Nagda said, “Sometimes doing nothing makes way for everything.”

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— Dick Friedman is an objective and unbiased certified management consultant. For more than 20 years, he has helped janitorial distributors, including some using bar code scanning, prevent warehouse mistakes that lose sales and customers. You may contact him via [www.GenBusCon.com](http://www.GenBusCon.com).

SOURCE: ISSA Articles
SC Johnson Professional understands the challenges that BSCs face caring for commercial facilities. That’s why we offer products that:

✓ Create efficiencies
✓ Simplify training
✓ Help control inventory costs

Use biocides safely. Always read the label and product information before use.

*TruShot 2.0TM system cleaning times validated per a sponsored ISSA Time, Efficiency, and Comparison study

LEARN MORE scjp.com
SC Johnson Professional Offers Innovative Solutions for Commercial Cleaning Teams

SC Johnson Professional, part of SC Johnson, is a total solutions provider for industrial, institutional and healthcare sectors. SC Johnson has a 133-year history and got its start in the professional cleaning sector in the 1930s. Since then, SC Johnson Professional has developed a wide range of well-known and trusted products that are used by facility cleaning teams in various sectors.

TruShot 2.0™ Mobile Dispensing System – An Innovative, Time-Saving Solution

If your facility’s cleaning team is facing labour shortages, the TruShot 2.0™ Mobile Dispensing System is a great option as it is easy to use and implement. Designed to increase productivity by providing optimized dilution delivery without having to stop, mix or measure, the TruShot 2.0™ system allows cleaners to use four essential cleaning formulas in one efficient tool.

SC Johnson Professional’s TruShot 2.0™ Mobile Dispensing System was validated to save time and reduce cost by a sponsored 2023 ISSA Time, Efficiency, and Comparison study. In the study, cleaners who used the TruShot 2.0™ Mobile Dispensing System reduced walking and refill time by over 70 per cent when compared to wall mount and ready-to-dilute systems where cleaners have to return to a supply closet to refill or carry a fill hose. That means the system can reduce cleaning time by 12 hours per quarter, or 48 hours per year, allowing cleaners to prioritize other tasks. This time savings can translate to cost savings as well. If a cleaner using the system makes $20 per hour and a business employs 20 cleaners, it could ultimately save a business $19,200 annually.

The system includes four essential cleaning chemicals, including TruShot 2.0™ Glass & Multi-Surface Cleaner, TruShot 2.0™ Power Cleaner & Degreaser and TruShot 2.0™ Restroom Cleaner which are certified to meet ECOLOGO UL 2759 Standard for Hard Surface Cleaners*. The fourth product, the TruShot 2.0™ Multi-Surface, Restroom Cleaner & Disinfectant, is a one-step disinfectant for hard, non-porous restroom surfaces.

Keep Hand Hygiene Top-of-Mind

Hand hygiene compliance is critical to help minimize the spread of germs. SC Johnson Professional’s Refresh™ FOAM soaps remove 99 per cent of dirt and germs when used as directed and meet the ECOLOGO UL 2784 Standard for Sustainability for Hand Cleaners for reduced environmental impact. The soaps also elevate a facility’s washroom

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experience with signature fragrances and formulations that leave hands feeling luxurious.

To help facility occupants maintain good hand hygiene, hand soap must be properly maintained in facility restrooms. However, it can be difficult to know when it is time to refill a traditional soap dispenser. For that reason, SC Johnson Professional offers the QuickView™ Dispenser with transparent sides to aid in soap level assessment from any angle.

**Committed to Customers, Committed to Excellence**

SC Johnson Professional’s purpose is to bring innovative, quality products and services to professional markets with outstanding performance that respect the environment, create efficiencies, reduce inventories, simplify training and provide a positive user experience. This is built on a deep understanding of customer needs and a vision for ‘rethinking the professional experience’ with the user in mind.

To learn more about SC Johnson Professional, visit [scjp.com](http://scjp.com). For more information about SC Johnson Professional’s TruShot 2.0™ Mobile Dispensing System, visit [here](#). For information about Refresh™ FOAM soaps, visit [here](#).

*ECOLOGO UL 2759 Standard for Hard Surface Cleaners: These products are certified to meet EcoLogo UL 2759 Standard for Hard Surface Cleaners. EcoLogo certifications are voluntary, multiattribute, life cycle based environmental certifications that indicate a product has undergone scientific testing, auditing, or both, to confirm its compliance with such standard. EcoLogo UL. 2759 Standard sets criteria for product formulation and manufacturing, and human health & environment toxicity. For more information and to view the specific standard, visit UL.com/EL.*

*ECOLOGO UL 2784 Standard for Sustainability for Hand Cleaners: These products are certified to ECOLOGO UL 2784 Standard for Sustainability for Hand Cleaners for reduced environmental impact. EcoLogo certifications are voluntary, multiattribute, life cycle based environmental certifications that indicate a product has undergone scientific testing, auditing, or both, to confirm its compliance with such standard. This standard sets metrics for environmental and other criteria, including: materials and packaging; human health and environment; and product performance and labeling. For more information and to view the standard, visit UL.com/EL.*
The sales profession is at a turning point that can’t be ignored and is changing faster than ever before. Every year, the changes are significant and noteworthy. Why? The reasons are technological, generational and even cultural. Essentially, four significant trends will drive sales into the future, and I plan to be at the forefront of it, which means that if you’re reading this article, you will be too. Let’s examine each one.

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE: SALES LANDSCAPE TRANSFORMATION

Artificial intelligence (AI) will be a game-changer in the sales industry. AI-powered tools will allow us to streamline processes, enhance efficiency and better communicate with our customers with a lower time investment.

Don’t get me wrong. AI is not magic. It is not a cure-all. It is a tool. It is the most robust tool ever developed for improving sales communication – but it is still a tool and, as such, it is useless without people to utilize it properly. If it is appropriately used, the capabilities it gives you are something I couldn’t have imagined a couple of years ago.

YOUNGER BUYERS: DYNAMIC SALES SHIFT

The rise of the digital generation has given birth to a new breed of buyers – younger, tech-savvy individuals who have grown up in a connected world. These buyers expect personalized experiences, instant access to information and seamless digital interactions.

To succeed in this new era, salespeople must understand, and adapt to the needs and preferences of younger buyers. This requires proficiently incorporating technology, embracing social selling,
and modifying current customer approaches.

One refrain I hear about younger buyers is, “Younger buyers don’t want to see salespeople!” This is NOT TRUE. They will see salespeople, but when they do, they expect more per-minute value for their time. They expect you to be on your game, informed and ready to help them do business. And if you aren’t, you probably won’t get a second shot. I empathize with this mindset; as anyone who has ever sold to me can attest, these have been my habits. Maybe everyone else is catching up to me!

YOUNGER SALESPERSONS: EMBRACING FRESH PERSPECTIVES

As younger buyers shape the sales landscape, younger salespeople bring fresh perspectives and approaches to the profession. These digital natives possess an innate understanding of technology, and quickly adapt to new tools and platforms. Their agility, creativity and willingness to embrace change can help revolutionize the sales process.

However, we must invest in training and mentoring these younger salespeople, harnessing their energy and innovation, and be flexible in conveying that knowledge. If it’s done right, you can cross-pollinate the tech savviness of your younger salespeople with the wisdom and experience of seasoned veterans, and make everyone better. Are there challenges? Yes. Sales managers need to up their game in the same way that salespeople do. But if you do, big wins await you.

EMPOWERED BUYERS: THE SHIFT IN POWER

Here’s the one trend I’ve talked about for the past few years. We salespeople held the reins in the past, guiding buyers through the purchasing journey. However, the tech and information revolution has flipped this dynamic.

Today, your buyers have access to abundant information at their fingertips. They conduct extensive research, read reviews, and seek recommendations from peers before engaging with a salesperson. Studies show that today’s buyer has completed 57 per cent of their buying process before ever seeing a salesperson.

Sales professionals must acknowledge this power shift and adapt accordingly. You are no longer the star of the show – the customer is. And your “sales process” generally won’t matter. What matters now is the buyer’s journey and your ability to help the customer navigate their journey.

Spoiler alert: If we want to succeed, we must embrace these four trends. When people converse with me at conferences about these four issues, they mainly complain:

“That gosh-darned AI stuff is gonna replace us!”

“Dang kids don’t even wanna talk to salespeople!”

“Young salespeople just won’t go make sales calls!”

“My customers want to call all the shots!”

So, will we get on board, move forward and succeed? Or, will we be that old person yelling ‘get off my lawn’? As I noted before, each of these four trends presents an opportunity, and each one offers.
last year, when visiting a wholesaler's distribution centre (DC), I watched personnel spend an afternoon unloading boxes from a tractor-trailer in nearly 100-degree heat. I could tell they were not happy and you had to feel some empathy for their challenges.

It suddenly occurred to me that instead of just thinking about how to design DC/warehouse space around robots, robots are now being built that are able to operate more on our terms, in our spaces and in our environments.

The situation I was observing just amplified how robotics are now being designed to handle the tough, often menial and often accident-prone tasks at warehouses.

THE SEEDS OF CHANGE

Robotics and other forms of automation are not new to logistics. We have conveyor belts, scanners, and other innovations that have helped automate and accelerate for decades. The obsession with speed is characteristic of the distribution industry. But the pace of investment and change – fueled by the pandemic-era e-commerce boom, a tight labour market and a fragile supply chain – has taken-off in recent years. Most experts say robotics will change how warehouses are operated and designed. Some say that we’re entering a golden era.

The seeds of the surge in warehouse robotics were actually planted during the 2008 recession, when carmakers – who depend heavily on robotics – dealt with a significant and prolonged downturn. But unlike repetitive assembly line manufacturing, warehouses demand a considerable degree of flexibility. Only recently have systems like visioning and artificial intelligence (AI) become cheaper and powerful enough to sort the tens of thousands of different products streaming through a DC/warehouse.

This technological leap is part of a larger embrace of robotics. In fact, the robotics industry saw a 28 per cent jump in purchases from 2020 to 2021, according to the Association for Advancing Automation.

The technology is becoming more affordable and is filtering down through the distribution industry, beyond the big players like Walmart and Amazon. It was predicted that there would be a 25 per cent increase in robotics and automation investment reported for 2022’s year-end.

Although seemingly fueled by distribution giants like Amazon, Walmart and others who saw logistics as ripe of innovation, these big players have essentially helped super-charge distribution’s turn toward automation.

Other organizations (large and even smaller) with a significant “labour content” also have a different perspective; making these jobs safer and more secure while still being focused on using robotics as a cost-saving measure, reducing aspects of human labour in an industry focused on that for decades, but doing so, not always by “cutting heads” in a tight labour market.

The adoption of robotics in DCs and
4 Top Trends Driving Sales into the Future

offers a challenge. How we handle the challenges will dictate whether we can capitalize on the opportunities.

This also doesn’t mean every sales skill we have learned is worthless. Unless it’s one of those techniques that depends on manipulating uninformed customers, it probably has a place in your repertoire going forward. It must be augmented with new skills and capabilities, refined to speak to unique buyer preferences, and perhaps rechannelled. Here are some bullet points to think about:

- To succeed with AI, you need to start learning about it, get proficient with it, and use it to generate content and communications. Meanwhile, you need to train your salespeople to improve the human-centered skills in selling that AI can’t do (yet).
- Younger buyers want more per-minute value for their time—they have great attention spans for a good story. How good are your people at storytelling?
- Younger people are not loyal to companies anymore. The 40-year career, the gold watch and the pension are gone—and they know it. They are, however, loyal to people. How good are you at building relationships with your salespeople?
- To navigate the buyer’s journey, you must first understand it. Do you?

As I look forward, the future is bright for great salespeople and sales leaders. Let’s navigate these challenges successfully.

– Troy Harrison is the author of “Sell Like You Mean It!” and “The Picket Sales Manager.” He is also a speaker, consultant and sales navigator. He helps companies build more profitable and productive sales forces. For more information, call (913) 645-3603 or email troy@troyharrison.com.

SOURCE: ISSA Articles

warehouses will increase by 50 per cent or more in the next five years, according to surveys taken by the Materials Handling Institute (MHI), a leading trade association for the material handling, logistics, and supply chain industry.

The goal is the “mechanical orchestration” of workflow, in which a team of autonomous mobile robots (AMRs), steered by sophisticated software and artificial intelligence, can move pallets, cartons and piece-pick products in a seamless environment in collaboration with the appropriate positioning of warehouse associates. And this includes just about all the common warehouse functionalities, from receiving and put-away to picking, order staging and shipping, as well as a myriad of other product transport requirements typical of DCs and warehouses.

You know, Netflix was the only company that could figure out streaming video, until suddenly it wasn’t. So, I can see an emerging middle class of robotics users in the distribution industry. Other companies of all sizes will start to catch up.

There’s increased demand for goods-to-person (GTP) robots offered by firms like Zebra/Fetch, Locus Robotics, 6 River Systems and GreyOrange.

These collaborative robots or cobots, which can look like a bin-carrying Segway, move back and forth among workers throughout the facility, significantly reducing the walking for warehouse associates. With these robots bringing cheaper and quicker ways to deploy, some robotics providers have even introduced robots as a service (RaaS) business model, leasing these machines to warehouse operators and reducing initial capital costs.

MOVING FORWARD

Automation is one major lever that companies can pull. Robots won’t replace workers in the near future, but rather make them more efficient and productive. Humans will be “crew chiefs,” commanding and maintaining teams of robots. Robots can also help with your worker recruitment while closing the generation gap among warehouse workers.

It will improve the quality of experience for the workforce because instead of constantly walking and doing role manual things, individuals will learn how to manage the robot to keep it up and running. It will create a career path, a more sophisticated skill-set and ensure the evolution of jobs does not leave long-time workers behind.

Some experts believe that lights-out warehouses—run by robots around the clock without requiring air conditioning or lighting, generally tuned to human needs—will arrive within three to four years.

I am not completely sure about that time frame at all; rather, I need to notice more companies in the distribution industry who recognize the advantages. These advantages include increased efficiency, reduced costs and a decrease in worker accidents—which amounts to be a proven potential for twice the increase in throughput—lowering the cost per transaction.

NOW IS THE TIME...

Frankly, I do worry for those owners and senior operations managers who are not paying attention to this fast-moving trend. Why? Because the DCs and warehouses that remain just “racks, carts and clipboards” are just not going to be able to keep up with the service demands and cost factors to stay competitive.

It is urgent that we take the time to learn more about robotics and consider its implementation. It won’t be long before robots reshape how we manage our DCs and warehouses.

– Howard C. Coleman, principal at MCA Associates, a management consulting firm, works with wholesale distribution and manufacturing companies seeking and committed to operational excellence. He is also the creator and host of the “MCA Talk” podcast series, Distribution on the Cusp of Metamorphosis. Coleman can be contacted at (203) 906-7268 or by email at hcoleman@mcaassociates.com.

SOURCE: ISSA Today
identify and vet potential partners in several ways.

First, actively participate in networking events and local business group meetings. These gatherings provide excellent opportunities to connect with potential bartering partners, build relationships and explore mutually beneficial arrangements.

Further, you can seek out and explore bartering opportunities with entities in industries that meet your business needs, such as radio or television stations, graphic design studios, or marketing agencies. This approach allows you to easily trade services for services, providing value to both parties. Some options for online forums and groups focused on bartering and business networking include TradeFirst, BizX. The Barter Company and Tradebank. Consider researching these platforms and others to find potential partners.

Lastly, there’s no strong recommendation other than word of mouth. Seek recommendations from colleagues, fellow business owners or satisfied customers who are involved in industries relevant to your organization’s goals.

When evaluating potential bartering partners, make sure the exchange is beneficial to both parties. The goods or services being bartered should have value and meet the needs of both businesses. Clearly define the goals and expectations of the bartering arrangement to ensure mutual alignment. You should also thoroughly evaluate the partner’s reliability and business reputation. Establish clear communication channels to maintain transparency and address any potential issues promptly. The key to a successful bartering partnership is maintaining open communication with partners.

Ahead of finalizing your agreement, discuss expectations, terms of the agreement, and any potential issues to ensure a smooth and flexible arrangement. Be open to adapting the bartering arrangement as your business needs evolve.

RECORDING BARTER TRANSACTIONS

Properly recording barter transactions is crucial for maintaining accurate financial records and staying in compliance with tax regulations. Here’s a quick guide to recording barter transactions in your financial books:

- **Establish a barter account.** Create a separate barter account in your accounting software to track barter transactions. This account will help you keep a clear record of all barter activities, separate from traditional cash transactions.

- **Treat bartering as revenue and expenses.** Record barter transactions as revenue and expenses at fair market value. This means valuing the good or services exchanged as if they were purchased or sold for cash. The fair market value represents the amount a willing buyer would pay to a willing seller for the goods or services in an open market.

- **Document barter agreements.** Maintain detailed documentation of all barter agreements. This documentation should include the date of the agreement, a description of the goods or services being exchanged, the fair market value of each item and the terms of the agreement.

- **Seek professional guidance.** Consult with your accountant or tax advisor so that you are properly recording barter transactions and complying with all applicable tax regulations. Barter transactions could have tax implications, including sales tax, income tax and barter exchange fees. Your financial advisors can provide specific guidance based on your business structure and location.

By following these guidelines, your barter transactions will be accurately recorded and reflected in your financial statements, providing a clear picture of your business’s financial health and performance.

BARTERING: SMART AND MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL

Bartering has emerged as a smart and mutually beneficial strategy for cleaning businesses, allowing them to swap their services for other needed goods or services. It offers numerous benefits, including costs savings, an expanded customer base and stronger business connections. By carefully identifying and vetting potential bartering partners, cleaning businesses can maximize the advantages of this time-tested trade arrangement. Proper recording of barter transactions to professional principles are crucial for ensuring successful bartering arrangements.

– Deanna Fowler is a dedicated bookkeeper at Breakaway Bookkeeping & Advising. With expertise in working with small businesses, Fowler finds particular joy in helping cleaning businesses streamline their finances, ensuring they have a clear picture of their financial standing. This clarity empowers her clients to make informed, strategic business decisions.

She is a certified QuickBooks ProAdvisor and a Xero Certified Advisor. She also received bookkeeper, accounting and payroll certifications from the National Association of Certified Public Bookkeepers (NACPB).

SOURCE: CMM Online

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January 31: ISSA Canada Coffee Talk Forum</td>
<td>Noon to 1:00 p.m. (Eastern). Click here for more information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>January 31: How to Leverage International Cleaning Week 2024</td>
<td>Webinar, 1:00 to 2:00 p.m. (Eastern). Click here for more information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 21 &amp; 22: FREE WHMIS Refresher Course, Virtual Event</td>
<td>10:00 a.m. to Noon (February 21) and 3:00 to 4:00 p.m. (February 22). RSVP for both sessions is required. Click here for more information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 12, 14, 19 &amp; 21: CMI Train the Trainer Virtual Event</td>
<td>Noon to 4 p.m. (Eastern). Click here for more information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 25: ISSA Hygieia Network, Networking &amp; Leadership Conference</td>
<td>Mississauga, ON. Click here for more information.</td>
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<td>November 18-21: ISSA Show North America 2024 – Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV. Click here for more information.</td>
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<tr>
<td>November 19: Canada Night 2024 – Mandalay Bay Convention Center, Las Vegas, NV. Click here for more information.</td>
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